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THE ART POSSIBILITIES OF STOVES.

ANOTHER winter is approaching and we have not heard that the manufacturers of stoves have been doing anything to redeem the conventional hideousness of that very American article of furniture. In the ordinary city house, this seemingly inevitable eyesore shares with the average mantelpiece of bad design the unenviable distinction of annulling whatever improvement in the general decoration of the room the artistic taste of the tenant may have brought about. A bad mantelpiece may be partly concealed by curtains or a lambrequin; the unsightly black iron grating through which the heated air from the furnace enters the room may be made less unsightly by bronzing. But what can one do to overcome the aggressive ugliness of the average American stove? That the stove is not necessarily an unsightly object it is hardly necessary to say to any one who has travelled in Germany and seen how graceful in outline and inlaid with soft colored tiles, it is often the most decorative thing in the room. The examples of old-time stoves given in our illustrations remind us how in ages past it was a thing of beauty, and the medium sometimes for the exhibition of elaborate industrial art-work. The first half of the nineteenth century will probably be marked in history as the period of the greatest debasement in domestic art since the days of barbarism, and the American stove, with its bad form and inartistic iron castings, may justly stand as its worst exemplar.

In England the bad iron work of the fire-place has hitherto been confined to the kitchen range. Lately there has been much talk there of introducing the stove into the dwelling-room after the American fashion. It is rather odd that just as the cheerful English open fireplace is being revived in the United States, the cheerless American stove should find advocates in England. We cannot think that the change will be popular. There is the chance, however, that the stove may receive at the hands of our British cousins something of the improvement which has been bestowed by them lately on all other articles of domestic furniture, and by this means we may perhaps get at second-hand what our native manufacturers apparently are incapable of originating. That the foremost artists of England may not find it beneath their dignity to design for this branch of manufacture we are encouraged to hope by the recollection that no less a master than Mr. E. J. Poynter designed the picturesque cooking range in the "grill room" in the refreshment department of the South Kensington Museum.

The German and Swedish tile stoves have many advantages over the American metal articles. In his official report, Mr. William P. Blake, United States Commissioner to the Paris Exhibition of 1878, speaks very highly of them. The Rörstrand works, he says, showed some with unusually large open fronts, permitting the fires to be seen. One, in mediæval style, was fitted up with a pyramidal retreating back. Another stove, of cylindrical form, intended to stand out in the room, separate from the wall, was enameled light blue and gilt. One of the wall stoves was of black enamel. Another very interesting display of stoves of this description, and particularly of the tiles in great variety, was made by Bernhard Erndt (court potter), Vienna. The patterns of his tiles are peculiarly attractive, many being deeply recessed and enameled in bright colors—brown, green, blue, white, and variegated. The stoves and stove tiles made in Berlin are in high repute, and are even imported to Vienna.

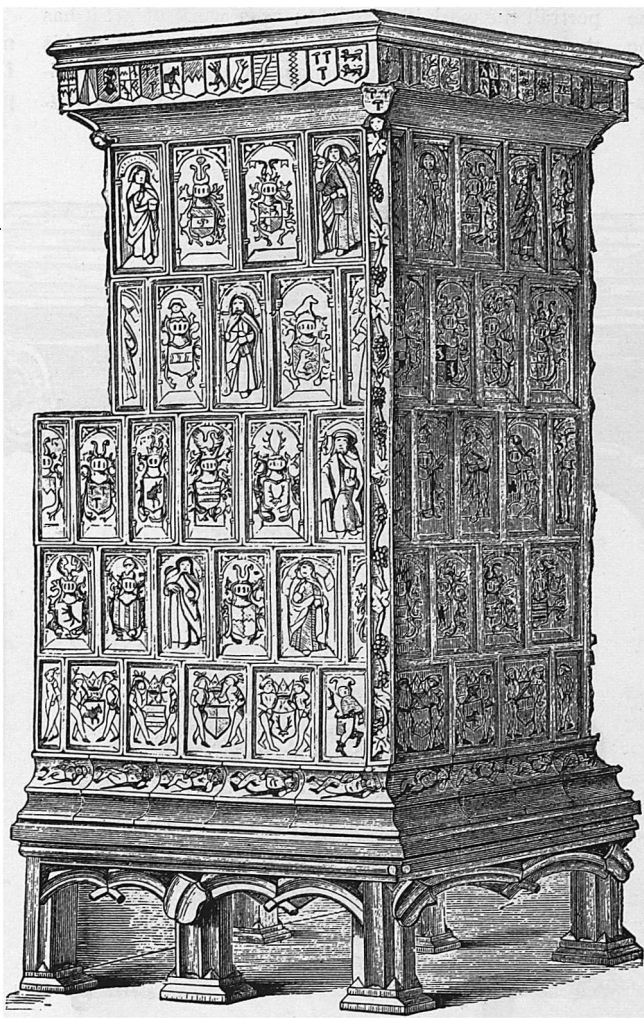
The following are some of the merits Mr. Blake accords to the "porcelain" stoves, as compared with the ordinary cast or sheet iron stoves for heating apartments: 1. Not being good conductors of heat, they radiate it slowly and without sudden changes; and being bulky, they retain heat for a long time, and maintain an equable, moderate temperature in the apartment, even long after the fire has burned out. 2. They do not scorch and "burn the air," or the floating particles of dust in it, as is the case with highly heated metallic stoves. 3. They combine to a great degree the advantages of an open fire-place and of a stove, giving ventilation, permitting the fire to be seen, while most of the heat is utilized, being stored up in the mass

of the tiles and slowly radiated. Doubtless such stoves would fail to satisfy those who require a red-hot surface, superheated air, and little ventilation; but many improvements might be made, so that all the heat which wholesome conditions require could be obtained without difficulty and with great economy.

The material of the so-called "porcelain" or German stoves, is not porcelain, but earthenware, moulded into tiles or hollow bricks about six or eight inches square, and several inches thick. They are made in a great variety of ornamental forms, and are generally glazed on the outer or exposed face, either white—which is most common—or brown, red, green, or black.

BOUDOIR PICTURES.

ONE of the unique volumes found by Mr. J. W. Bouton during his visit to England this summer, is a large folio labelled "Macklin's Poets." It has no letter-press, but consists of twenty-five very carefully hand-colored stipple engravings of the pretty Bartolozzi sort, the edges all scrupulously—or shall we say unscrupulously?—trimmed away after the fashion of our grandmothers, who did not believe in wide margins,



OLD GERMAN APOSTLE STOVE.

and neatly mounted on heavy paper. The plates, in subject, are mostly of the sentimental kind much favored by young ladies of a past generation. The volume under consideration may not belong to the realm of fine art; but there is a certain meretricious beauty in an harmoniously colored print of this soft, sensuous kind which is so undeniably attractive that there is not one of us who would not delight to turn the leaves of this book on the drawing-room table. There is a fashionable demand just now in England for colored plates of this kind, for framing. If we owned "Macklin's Poets," we think we would cut it up and make the ladies of our acquaintance happy at Christmas with pictures for their rooms. How very charming a dado composed of these plates would be for a boudoir or a drawing-room!

THE "Queen Anne stove-screen," lately introduced in England, consists of a curtain supported by two brass uprights and a cross-bar, each having a telescopic action, so that the screen can be adjusted to the width or height of the fireplace. After having done duty during summer as a fireplace screen, it can be turned to account in winter as a fire-screen.

WHAT ORNAMENT SHOULD BE.

ALL true ornament is distinguished by repetition, symmetry, and alternation. A rhythmical balance of parts is an essential to effective ornament, and was strongly insisted upon by the late Owen Jones in his standard work on the subject. It is a quality that was apparently ignored by the Japanese artists, and it would be interesting could we know how Owen Jones would have reconciled their work with his rules. Lecturing on this subject before the Royal Institution, Mr. H. H. Statham said that ornament was not produced by drawing a series of irregular scratches or even isolated curves on a given surface; but if these scratches, lines, or curves conformed to a fixed plan, the production of ornament could hardly be avoided. The elementary forms might be considerably varied, and the result would be rendered more pleasing so long as the variation was based upon some geometrical form, perhaps rudely worked out. There must be, to some extent, a geometric symmetry, although this need not be very apparent. Much of the ornament which appeared to have little law except its own sweet will was capable of reduction to a rule, and owed its value to conformity to this set scheme. However unequal the ornament might be, there must be a clear relation between its distribution and the space it occupied, a law governing the use of ornament being that the ornament must appear not only to fit, but to occupy, the space in which it was placed, so as to show it was intended for that position.

Curves played a large part in ornament, and often they were drawn in an unscientific manner. A universal law was that all curves, whether springing from other curves or from straight lines, should be struck at a tangent to the lines from which they diverged, and when curves conformed to this rule the effect was agreeable and natural, and when it was departed from the effect was weak and crippled, because the lines would appear to cut through one another, whether continued to that point or not. Further, in two designs of leaves springing from common bases, that in which the stems ended parallel to each other would look better than that in which they approached one another; for in the latter the mental effect would be to continue the lines so as to intercept each other. The effect of these qualities of rhythm, repetition, geometrical symmetry, alternation, equal distribution of spaces, and proper relation of curve to curve made up what might be termed abstract ornament.

Ornament should not attempt to imitate nature directly; but a large class of genuine ornament was based upon the adaptation of natural forms. There was also a beautiful class of ornament not derived from these forms, and which might be distinguished as "abstract" ornament. In the decorative work of all savage nations a great proportion of the ornament was produced by filling up the space treated with simple lines, having little meaning or purpose in themselves. This abstract ornament might be traced in a higher form in Egyptian art, and reached its greatest development of perplexity and mystery in Saracenic art, in which a puzzling and complicated effect was produced by the shifting and rearrangement of a few lines. The familiar Greek key pattern was in like manner a collocation of squares, with one side cut away, interwoven with one another. One of the most intricate Saracenic patterns was a series of concentric hexagons, slightly tilted. Ornament could be produced not only by drawing on a surface, but by varying that surface so as to produce an alternation of light and shade. Ornament derived from nature, while it must not imitate, might have various degrees of approach to, nature, governed in their nearness of likeness to a considerable extent by the nature of the material and medium worked in. Thus in crewel work, exact symmetry should be avoided, and the imitation of nature might be comparatively near, but ornament to be placed on a building should be architecturalized. A leading reason against the attempt to precisely copy nature was that in most media it could not be done successfully; the direct effort to reproduce a flower in carving only called attention to the absence of the delicacy, the finish, the fragility of